

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Volume 52 No. 26

December 30, 2020

suggested donation \$1

Oakland

TENANTS ATTACK CAPITALIST HOUSING CRISIS

OAKLAND, CA, December 5—Motorcycle, bike and skateboard riders led a caravan of 125 Oakland tenants in cars today, stopping traffic and chanting “Fight, fight, fight – housing is a human right!”

This “Rally on Wheels” united multiple tenants’ unions into an Oakland-wide force calling for rent cancellation and guaranteed housing for the homeless.

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members sold CHALLENGE and distributed leaflets calling for communist revolution to end the racist differentials in homelessness, hunger and disease. With four vacant homes for every homeless person in Oakland, 70 percent are Black while many more are immigrants.

Our leaflet argued that homelessness is not due to “personal defects” of the homeless but rather a result of the systematic, racist injustice of capitalism.

Workers make homes, capitalism makes homelessness

The caravan started with a short rally with workers passing out signs in English and Spanish that said, “Tenants Against Capitalism,” and “Join Tenant Unions.” Among our PLP signs was “Workers Produce Homes, Capitalism Creates Homelessness.” Speakers said that capitalism was the source of the problems, that mass action and not the electoral process was the main way of making change, and that we need a “new society.” The 5 year-old daughter of one of the Moms 4 Housing occupiers led the crowd in rousing chants and many drivers honked in support.

The workers organized the rally very well, so well that the cops were nowhere in sight. The atmosphere was very positive, and we even enlisted a local radio station to broadcast the speeches to those of us quarantined in our cars.

We stopped for rallies at four apartment buildings organized on rent strike. Multiracial groups of tenants spoke emotionally and proudly about their struggles against their landlords and capitalism.

One stop was a gutted, burned out shell of a multi-family home destroyed by an electrical fire



after many complaints from the tenants. The final stop was a call-out in front of the home of an abusive property manager. Tenants posted a flyer with his picture and denouncing his actions all over the neighborhood. Due to tenant and worker struggles Oakland has better rent control than most cities and an eviction moratorium that extends to the end of the pandemic. But housing insecurity and capitalism are still a disaster for the working class.

Most importantly, many blamed capitalism as the source of housing insecurity and the shameless profiteering of corporate landlords during the pandemic.

They also called for the end of the “commodification of housing” – the ability of private capitalists to buy, sell and rent for profit property that should be a basic human need.

PLP members are active in the tenant organizations that came out today and have consistently

brought our communist politics through leaflets and CHALLENGE to these events. These personal relationships have led some young housing organizers to join a PLP study group.

Our goal in these groups is to build revolutionary class-consciousness and PLP. This means understanding that capitalism is the problem, and that we must name it as the system that is attacking us all over the world. While we fight for immediate needs, we are also building the strength to take out the whole system. We see developing a Party that fights for communism as a crucial step in this process.

Communism means secure and accessible housing is available to allow our humanity to flower. Collectively, we can build a world that meets the needs of the international working class. Fight for communism!✊

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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OUR FIGHT

- ★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.
- ★The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.
- ★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.
- ★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.
- ★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society’s benefits and burdens.
- ★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.
- ★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.
- ★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.
- ★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.
- ★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

CHALLENGE/DESAFIO (ISSN 0009-1049) published bi-weekly by Challenge Periodicals. 1 issue \$1. One Year: \$20. Six months: \$15. Send address changes to CHALLENGE Periodicals, GPO Box 808 Brooklyn, NY 11202, December 30, 2020•Volume 52 No. 26

Editorial

Food vs. Profit: Mass fightback in India

On November 26, in the largest protest in human history, hundreds of millions of workers in India staged a general strike against a government plan for “free market” deregulation of agriculture. For weeks, tens of thousands of poor farmers have taken to the streets. Fighters blocked national highways and trains, dodged tear gas canisters, and clashed with riot gear-clad police. They burned effigies of the prime minister, anti-Muslim racist and state terrorist Narendra Modi, who rammed through the new laws as part of a fascist drive to prepare for inter-imperialist war.

India’s agriculture system is dramatic proof of why the capitalist profit system must be smashed. Sixty percent of India’s 1.3 billion people eke out their livelihoods by farming, most of them on plots not much larger than a soccer field. The country ranks first in the world in milk production and second in rice, wheat, vegetables, and fruits, yet 190 million people are undernourished (fao.org). Pressed by debts and bankruptcies, farmers routinely resort to suicide—more than 10 per day in the western state of Maharashtra alone (ruralindiaonline.org).

By removing price supports and the guaranteed distribution of farmers’ goods, the new laws will accelerate corporate takeovers: “With these protections ... cast off, there is little left to stop Big Ag companies within India from swallowing market share” (Slate, 12/9). Millions of small farmers and farmworkers may be pushed into starvation; millions more will be funneled into urban factory and service jobs, where they generate a higher return on investment for the bosses.

While the mass protests showcase the boldness and solidarity our class will need to defeat capitalism, these narrow reform demands are a deadly trap for workers. Settling for anything less than communist revolution will only strengthen the bosses. The horrific inequalities in India make it clear that capitalism can never serve workers’ needs. Only a worker-run society can provide what our class truly needs and deserves.

Modi lines up behind U.S. rulers

Modi’s latest moves toward fascist control reflect a growing worldwide instability and sharpening inter-imperialist competition between the U.S. and China (see CHALLENGE, 12/17). As the U.S. declines as a world power, its ruling class needs India as a strategic ally against neighboring China and nearby Russia (Foreign Affairs, 11/10). India has amassed 150 nuclear warheads (armscontrol.org, August 2020), and its huge population could supply masses of troops in a conventional ground war.

For the last five months, India and China have stationed at least 100,000 troops in a stare-down over a disputed region in the Himalayas (Foreign Affairs, 10/6). In June, after Chinese soldiers killed 30 Indian soldiers at this flashpoint, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence declared that the U.S. would “continue to stand firm with our allies in the region, like India.” More recently, India opted out of joining the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a huge slap in the face to the Chinese ruling class (Economic Times, 11/5). Relations between the world’s two most populated countries are at their lowest point in four decades (South China Morning Post, 12/9). And there’s no telling when a regional clash could be the spark that sets off World War III. On December 15, the New York Post reported that a U.S. Army command based in Alaska would train with the Indian Army in 2022—in the Himalayas.

India bosses, we charge you with genocide!

With a vastly under-reported 10 million infections and 144,000 Covid-19 deaths in India, Modi and his murderous band of bosses have grossly failed to protect workers. The working class everywhere is suffering from the disease of capitalism, and those who have the least under this system will always endure the harshest attacks. Hundreds of millions in India work and live without basic sanitation. Inferior for-profit healthcare, shoddy housing, and starvation-level wages conspire to put workers in danger. These are the real “preexisting conditions” that pave the way for transmission, infection, and death in a pandemic. Even after Covid-19 is contained, capitalism will remain to sicken us by the billions.

With its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) down by nearly a quarter, India is in an economic depression. Since March, an estimated 140 million people have lost their jobs (New York Times, 11/27). Just as Donald Trump blames immigrants as U.S. capitalism flounders, Modi has attempted to distract India’s working class from his blunders by scapegoating Muslim workers. The nation’s health ministry repeatedly blamed an Islamic group for spreading the virus, triggering a wave of racist violence. Muslim workers have been run out of their neighborhoods, assaulted with bats, and threatened with lynching (NYT, 4/12).

This racist campaign is nothing new. In August 2019, in a brazen land grab, Modi’s government canceled the “autonomous” status of the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir. It flooded the region with troops, shut down the internet, and jailed opposition leaders. Next, Modi’s hyper-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) established a national registry in the eastern state of Assam, forcing workers to prove that they’d arrived in India before the mid-1970s. More than two million people, mostly Muslims, have since been stripped of their citizenship (Time, 12/20/19). These racist measures prompted mass fightback by millions of workers, who flooded the cities’ streets and battled police.

Fight for communism

India has a rich history of class struggle and revolutionary movements. Tragically, workers have been betrayed again and again by fake-“communist” parties that sell out to the bosses and help exploit the working class (see page 5). Progressive Labor Party stands with the working class of India as it fights against the blood-sucking bosses and their brutal oppression. The next step is for workers to shift their prodigious energy from organizing mass reform protests to building a society organized by and for workers—a communist society.

Under capitalism, farming, like everything else, is about making money, not feeding people. PLP believes that reforming capitalism is impossible. The workers’ need for food production—for survival—is in direct contradiction with the bosses’ need for maximum profit. Capitalists always place their narrow interests over people’s lives, whether it’s Modi, AMLO, Xi Jinping, or Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

Our solution lies outside the capitalist system. We must look to one another. We need an egalitarian society without racism or sexism or inter-imperialist war, where workers will share abundance and scarcity alike. Join the PLP and fight for communism! Power to the working class!✊

Garment Industry

Women workers fight back, need the international solidarity

EL SALVADOR, December 16—

More than one hundred women working for Florenzi Industries are occupying the building of this business in Soyapango, in the San Salvador industrial area. These workers took direct action, occupying their workplace since July 2020 when Florenzi closed its doors due to Covid-19. owner, Sergio Pineda, refused to pay the workers for four months of labor, including benefits and vacation time.

On March 18 President Bukele ordered the shutdown of 152 maquilas for four months. Pineda, the capitalist and owner of Florenzi Industries, took advantage of the presidential decree to close the factory without paying about \$500,000 dollars that he owes the workers. Even worse, he did not pay for the forced confinement due to the pandemic. On the contrary, he used the pandemic as an excuse to declare bankruptcy, while offering the workers compensation of an old sewing machine with an approximate value of \$100.00 dollars. Of the 209 workers 97 of them accepted what they were offered, which covered only a minimum of what Pineda owes these workers. Since then, 113 workers decided to face the brutal challenges of Covid-19 and the lack of employment that forces them to go hungry and die.

These workers are experiencing capitalism's cruel exploitation. The capitalists have stolen all the wealth created by the workers through all the years of long hours of labor, and now they are facing unemployment. The international working-class exposed to these persistent experiences, need a new social and economic system. That's communism where all the wealth created by the working-class is used to satisfy the working-class and their families' needs, not to enrich the parasite capitalists such as Sergio Pineda, who is part of the El Salvador government oligarchy.

Florenzi Industries is one of the 152 maquilas operating in El Salvador after the civil war. These factories are distributed in 17 free zones, free of taxation and employ 56,000 workers. The majority are women who are paid the minimum salary with little or no benefits. These brave women demanded from the legislative assembly an immediate solution to the problem. Instead the assembly ordered the labor department to resolve it, but the labor minister claimed not to have the legal tools to resolve the issue, relegating the responsibility to the courts. The workers protested asking for the immediate firing of the labor minister, Rolando Castro, accusing him of protecting the boss. During the protest the workers stopped traffic to put pressure on the government, yet the corporate media was silent because it is part of and serves the elite capitalists. In August, men in police uniforms tried entering the Florenzi Industries building trying to get the equipment and materials

LA: students & teachers unite to fight racist evictions



LOS ANGELES, December 16—Housing is a necessity, but under capitalism, workers' needs are never guaranteed. As communists, we must organize to demand the needs of our class to be met! Through that process, workers will see the limitations of these struggles and have the potential to understand the change they want can only come through communism.

This time our fight is for the home of a working class family. Los Angeles has one of the greatest unhoused populations in the entire world! These numbers are only going to explode with the looming ban on evictions set to expire at the end of January. Gentrification is making it impossible for families to stay in neighborhoods where they have lived for decades. We have positioned ourselves for this fight through work at a local high school and commitment to working in a tenant's rights mass organization.

The overlap of the work in these two crucial places demonstrates our potential for growth. Now we must actualize it! The mass organi-

zation is planning, with the evicted family, a multi-pronged approach to fighting back. The high school (where two of the siblings who were evicted attend) along with friends has worked with staff and students to spread this campaign. We are in the very early stages, but stay tuned in the upcoming issues of CHALLENGE to hear about an eviction blockade, organized protests at the sleazy investment company, spreading the word throughout the community where the eviction occurred, and relying on the working class to collect the things this family needs.

While many different groups are involved in fighting for workers' needs and rights, Progressive Labor Party is the only organization that offers a long-term solution. Our members will fight tooth and nail to reclaim the home stolen from this working class family, but that will not stop the next family from being evicted. Capitalism is a system that will always put profits over people. It does not deserve to exist! Let's tear it down together! Our fight against evictions today are the necessary seeds planted for future revolution. Join us✊

without succeeding.

The workers have learned that government institutions are capitalist servants. Their fight is "against the neoliberal capitalist" where "the poor sew what the rich wear". The historic international working-class experience has taught us that capitalism of any kind, neoliberal, national or imperialist is a dead end for the workers. Therefore, what the working-class needs is to fight for communism.

In a New York Times article about labor abuses in El Salvador in 2001, Steven Greenhouse exposed the most inhuman abuses against the workers. They included no ventilation, poor hygiene, long working hours, forced overtime, and frequent layoffs, especially targeting those who want to organize, or support a union. Under these precarious circumstances of slave wages the apparel industry in El Salvador, just in the year 2000, exported 1.6 billion dollars of production to the U.S.

From the 1.6 billion produced by the workers, less than 10 percent is for the workers while the factory owners keep more than 90

percent of what workers produce. This is how the workers in the maquilas become victims of international capitalist exploitation.

The majority of the maquila workforce are women who are faced with labor exploitation, gender exploitation, very low salaries, the worse labor conditions, constant sexual harassment and sexual abuse, and unpaid work at home. It is no coincidence that feminist groups are unifying in the fight with the workers.

It is important to acknowledge the international working-class historic experience of women and men fighting together for communism, particularly in Russia and China. They mobilized millions of peasant and city women workers; they made gigantic and significant progress in social, labor, economic and gender equality.

The Progressive Labor Party fights for communist equality, gender equality and against the racial discrimination of the international working-class. We are in solidarity with the Florenzi industry workers.✊

Mexico: pandemic exposes chaos of capitalism

MEXICO, December 16—In Mexico, like the rest of the world, the coronavirus has exposed the weakness and chaos of capitalism. Officially 1.3 million people have been infected and 130,000 have died. Unofficial reporting has the numbers up to three times higher. This health crisis shows the inability of the capitalist system to meet the needs of the working class. The wealthy have been weathering the storm in relative security while the working class has been dying. Clearly it is not Covid-19, but capitalism that is the biggest threat. The government of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), like the rest of the capitalists, are paralyzed by the system they rule over. Only a communist society will provide the kind of care the working-class needs. Simply feeding people so they could stay home instead of working would have saved countless lives and stopped the spread of the disease. Instead paralysis and confusion has been the response of the ruling class.

The Mexican ruling class has followed the pattern of the rest of capitalism by putting business first and having the poorest go to work. As Covid-19 inevitably spread, the AMLO government has been reduced to placing all the blame on previous governments for dismantling the healthcare system. While healthcare has been devastated over the last 20 years, the current government has failed to take any forceful action to contain the disease and protect the working class. Instead it has preferred to allocate resources to megaprojects around the country while blaming people who “leave their homes” for the spread of the virus, knowing full well that 50 percent of the population lives in the informal economy and has no choice but to leave their homes to work.

Liberal Mexican bosses leave working class to die

AMLO's response is indistinguishable from the conservative governments he claims to fight.

The AMLO government's health cabinet committed criminal negligence by not providing sufficient and adequate quality protective equipment on time to health workers fighting the pandemic. Protests and complaints have not stopped since the first cases. Millions of workers in Mexico live day to day; if they do not work, they do not eat and for them there is no support. The factories, maquilas and small workshops continued their activities and in those places there were outbreaks and deaths of many workers. All the industrial zones of the country continue as hot spots of infection and deaths.

The development of a vaccine is further exposing the chaos of capitalism. While the wealthy imperialist countries are struggling to build the infrastructure to get the vaccine produced, distributed and given to the population, Mexico, like most of the countries that have been gutted by the big imperialists over the last century, are struggling to buy just a minimal amount of the vaccine (Aristegui 12/11). The government announced the pre-purchase of enough to vaccinate at most 17.2 million people, between December 2020 and December 2021 in a country of 130 million.

Health under the capitalist system is a commodity. The competition to have a vaccine for Covid-19 will translate into huge profits for pharmaceutical companies and geopolitical rearrangements for the imperialist countries they represent. Technological advances in medicine are focused on obtaining maximum profits, which is why thousands of workers still die from diseases for which there is treatment, but that they cannot buy. The working class has many of the underlying conditions that make them vulnerable to coronavirus, such as poor diet, unhealthy conditions, the lack of recreation or physical activity and of course, the lack of preventive health. All this is due to the need for capital to exploit the workforce to the maximum.

The epidemic is capitalism

Economically, the loss of almost a million jobs in the last nine months (elfinanciero.com), exacerbates the economic crisis. The most affected have been the 60 million workers who live off the informal trade, who lack social security and for whom staying home is unthinkable. Others seriously affected have been flexible or outsourcing workers who do not have regulated working conditions. This includes many health care workers, who face strenuous hours of work every day, and who lack the materials and resources to attend to their patients. On the other hand, the workers who have been able to protect themselves by working from home, either virtually or by bringing home the materials for product assembly, are living in a hell of overexploitation. Many have tripled their work hours. They are pressured by their employers to be available at all times and to carry out many more tasks, under the assumption that they don't have to travel to work. They are also continually attacked by their employers and accused of not working hard enough (Forbes, 6/30).

As a comrade teacher summed up well in one of the Progressive Labor Party's study circles in Mexico, two epidemics actually occur, one for the poor and one for the rich, one for the workers and one for the capitalists. Mexico is one of the countries with the greatest inequality in the world, so this difference cannot be hidden. In private hospitals between 5 and 15 percent of patients who are intubated die, but in a public hospital half or up to 8 of every 10 die. That criminal panorama cannot be changed by any politician like Lopez Obrador or the rightists of other parties like the PRI, PAN or PRD. It can only be achieved with a communist revolution that establishes a society with a health system based on the needs of the working class.☸

Pakistan: workers erupt in response to crashing economy

PAKISTAN, December 16—High inflation of wheat and sugar; low wages and factory closures. The working class has been forced into the streets, chanting against the brutal capitalist system which is producing poverty, unemployment, nationalism, and other horrors. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) is spreading class-consciousness among workers associated with different trade union organizations, government employees' organizations, student unions, and more. We are striving to bring communist politics in practice.

Economy spirals into chaos

Pakistan's economy is dependent upon the financial support of lending mafias and capitalist monetary institutions. Under prime minister Imran Khan, the economy is crashing. It has nothing to deliver except unemployment, starvation, chaos, political instability and social destruction to the working class masses. Capitalist bosses are hungry of profit, so they are making the lives of the working class more miserable by increasing prices of basic commodities. Right-wing capitalists, mafias and corporations financed the election campaign of the ruling party and are now extracting more than what they spent during the last elections in 2018. They are super-exploiting the working class.

Recently we were involved in a struggle to unite different trade unions and groups of working class people against all aspects of capitalist exploitation—unemployment, low wages, price hikes, poverty, and workplace harassment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dictated policies. Thousands of workers across more than 61 labor organizations and trade unions united under the umbrella of the All Pakistan Employees, Labor and Pensioners Movement (APELPM).

This APELPM brought thousands of workers to Islamabad, the federal capital of Pakistan. Participants in this demonstration protested against the capitalist bosses' vicious policies. The protest is a message to the bosses that workers are united. However, the protests in Islamabad have set a new precedent in the history of the country in terms of worker's joint struggle. Last time such overwhelming workers unity was demonstrated in 1968-69.

Protesters sat in front of the Parliament House, while chanting, “No To IMF, Long Live the Workers' Union, Go Imran Go.” They were demanding raises in their salaries in proportion to the recent price-hike due inflation. Active and retired workers were angry that the government failed to raise salaries and pensions for government employees in the current fiscal budget presented in June 2020.

Police used water cannons, batons, tear gas shells, cruelty and other fascist tactics to stop the working class from demonstrating in front of the Parliament house. But after a vigorous face-to-face fight with police, workers defeated the police. Bosses used all their power to empty the area from demonstrating workers but failed. Finally the government decided to sign an agreement with the demonstrators. They accepted the demands and begged the protesters to vacate the area. Next, the workers need to move beyond economist demands and join the political fight for the whole working class's liberation.

A system in crisis makes workers pay the price

Workers cannot get medicines for themselves or their families from hospitals. They cannot afford to send their children to schools, so they send them to work as beggars or to work at automobile workshops, restaurants or bakeries, earning very little. All the subsidies on wheat, flour and some other ba-

sic items have been withdrawn by the government. This makes basic items that used to be subsidized beyond the reach of many working class people.

So-called leftists here in Pakistan, and also all over the world, are afraid of talking about communist revolution. These so-called progressives are using terms like nationalism, secularism, democracy, equality, and to some extent socialism, but never communism. They are hiding the truth that only a communist society can serve humanity. But we in PLP are talking about communism, the creation of a society and the need of an international revolution led by the international communist Progressive Labor Party.

PLP is consistently and enthusiastically participating in different activities of working class people wherever we are active. We are bringing revolutionary communist ideas to workers around us to challenge the bosses and their capitalist system. We always try to play an active political role while organizing sit-ins, strikes, protests and rallies.

We are not hiding the truth that only an international communist revolution under the red banner of PLP can bring prosperity and peace to the lives of the working class.

We emphasized that the bosses are making agreements just to get demonstrators out of this sensitive area. They may give some reforms to the workers to avoid their struggle in the near future, but it's very true that the working class cannot achieve their goals of equality, justice and prosperity under capitalism. We must establish a communist society through an international communist revolution under the leadership of the international revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party. Join us.☸

India: how did the old communist movement go astray?



Huge portions of today's protests (see editorial, page 2) have been dominated by red flags of the Indian Communist Party (CPI). But if communists of the 1940s had been able to win a communist future, the misery leading to the 2020 protests would not exist. Where did India's communist movement go wrong?

The question is of immediate concern. As workers across the globe continue to face lose-lose electoral choices like the 2020 U.S. presidential election there is a constant pressure to side with 'lesser evil' capitalists. A brief look at the history of the Indian Communist Party shows us the deadly error of seeking unity with any capitalists.

The 2020 farmers' protest movement involves many older workers whose parents lived through the harrowing passage of the 1943-44 famine, a little-known holocaust wiping out three million Bengali workers and peasants engineered by British imperialism. Indian communists did not organize mass anger around the famine into a revolutionary movement for communism because, having been forced into war against the Nazis in 1940, even British imperialism, desperate to squeeze life from its colonies to the very end at the cost of Nazi-scale atrocity, was the "lesser evil" capitalist! How could this be?

Failure of the united front strategy

In 1935, the world communist movement, based in the Soviet Union, adopted a strategic shift away from revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat to a "United Front" against fascism. In effect, this position offered a deal to capitalists – "if you unite with us to defeat Hitler, we promise not to organize a sharp class struggle leading to revolution."

For the record, all the big liberal demo-

cratic imperialists rejected this deal because they preferred the deal offered by Hitler and the fascists – "invest in our growing fascist economy and look the other way as we expand and we will smash the Soviet Union."

As it turns out, the fascists were the ones smashed in the war, smashed by the remnants of Soviet communism. After the war the Soviet-led communist movement did not break with the search for 'lesser-evil' capitalists to unite with (The Chinese communists were a bit better on this for a time and in the early 1960s Progressive Labor Party was born from U.S. communists following Chinese leadership who split away from the Soviet-affiliated Communist Party USA).

Another bankrupt strategy

In the case of India, after the war ended and independence was won India's communists pursued the bankrupt strategy of leading a "peaceful transition to socialism" which mired them in electoral politics.

Through the Cold War there was a split in the Indian ruling class: some elements were content to continue the semi-feudal arrangements of exploitation dating back to the era of British imperialism while another element was seeking to cut out British capitalists.

They saw a "comprador bourgeoisie" who continued to serve the interests of British imperialism and a "national bourgeoisie" that was more committed to keeping the profits squeezed from the labor of desi workers and peasants in the hands of Indian capitalists, with minimal land reforms to placate the masses. It is those land reforms that are under attack today.

The tens of millions of workers on the subcontinent who have cast votes for Communist Party candidates since the 1950s have been dragged into the doomed quest to find some "progressive" portion of the bourgeoisie

Old communist movement fell for "lesser evil" politics

By 1951, the politics of the Communist Party of India (CPI) led them to make a fatal error in its analysis of splits within the Indian ruling class.

The CPI asserted that the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, was led a "[g]overnment of landlords and princes and the reactionary big bourgeoisie collaborating with the British imperialists" (Wikipedia). Yet, they saw a national bourgeoisie that could play a progressive role in Indian politics. The strategy of the CPI became one of fighting for leadership of trade unions and mass organizations and winning public office with the aim of influencing the Congress Party and unifying with the national bourgeoisie for a stronger state-controlled economy. (The Congress Party is the same party that the pedophile and anti-Black racist Mahatma Gandhi belonged to.)

The arrangements protecting small farmers under attack today date from land reform policies that date to this era of higher communist influence. By 1953, the path of legal struggle over armed struggle had won out.

Soviet influence was toward legal orientation, Chinese influence was toward armed/peasant struggle orientation. In 1956, the 20th Party Congress of the Soviet Union settled on the "peaceful transition to socialism" as its main strategy. One right faction of the CPI saw Nehru as anti-imperialist and independent while the left faction of the CPI saw him as a defender of old feudal interests.

with which to ally.

This strategy leads, always, back to the monstrous disregard for the lives of workers that has been at the core of the capitalist social order since its birth in the period of the Atlantic slave trade. Workers, and especially communists, must remain completely clear-eyed on this matter.

In this connection the old adage of the Scorpion and the Frog is worth keeping in mind:

A scorpion, which cannot swim, asks a frog to carry it across a river on the frog's back. The frog hesitates, afraid of being stung by the scorpion, but the scorpion argues that if it did that, they would both drown. The frog considers this argument sensible and agrees to transport the scorpion.

Midway across the river, the scorpion stings the frog anyway, dooming them both.

The dying frog asks the scorpion why it stung despite knowing the consequence, to which the scorpion replies: "I couldn't help it. It's in my nature"

The working class of India, of the larger subcontinent, and of the world needs an armed struggle for communist revolution. There is no peaceful transition of power or a lesser evil set of bosses. The Progressive Labor Party strives to build a mass international communist party. Join us.✊

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Learning to fight for students

The pandemic has provided educators with opportunities to build some working-class muscles.

I teach at a high school with a 97 percent Black and Latin immigrant population. While our Black principal prides herself in being pro-student, she leads racist attacks against students with the highest needs.

Just last week, my 14-year-old advisee McKay—a young man with special needs—ran away from home and the principal ordered us to stay out of it. “Do not get involved. That’s not your job,” she said.

This is the same principal that ordered us not to get involved when our student Malcolm, also special needs, was brutalized by the cops during a demonstration against the murder of George Floyd and others in May.

When the school bosses prioritize paperwork and liabilities over the safety of students, they are participating in the systemic pushing out and alienation of Black working-class teens, especially young men. Teachers must push the boundaries of what is “part of our job.” Supporting our students and building student-parent-educator unity is part of our job. Exposing the racist practice of expendability is part of our job.

Many people at work don’t see it that way but little actions add up. So whether it’s fighting to give students more opportunities to meet with teachers for office hours or building a student newspaper or building in antiracism and the fight against police terror into the curriculum, we are slowly but surely learning to stick our necks out for students.

This work is inherently antiracist and through these tiny actions, we see how the system routinely fails our students and then blames them for failing. That is infuriating. And then, a teen in class yesterday said, “we don’t need cops in our schools because students feel scared and they should listen to us because it’s our experience and our life.” That is cause for optimism.

As for McKay, he is still out there in 31 degree weather. I will keep calling. If he isn’t living proof of why we need to kill capitalism, I don’t know what is.

★★★★★

Communism is anti-capitalist vaccine

Nine of ten people in poorer countries will not get a Covid-19 vaccine until 2022 and hundreds of millions will never get it and die because vaccine companies have intellectual property rights (IPR). Even though tax payers have mostly paid for their research, IPR allows these companies to produce only enough vaccines that rich countries have contracted to pay for. All current vaccine supply has already been bought up and will be distributed to serve profit and political needs. Six of the wealthiest nations have already refused to suspend their IPR, which would allow the world’s vaccine companies to copy and produce a timely and affordable people’s vaccine that could save the lives of billions worldwide.

It has been said that capitalists would impose IPR on the use of the sun if they could. is the contradiction between them and communists who fight to use production for people’s needs and an end to profits, inequality and exploitation. Vaccines like all properties need to be owned and shared by all peoples if only because no country is safe until all are safe. And vaccines without masks and distancing won’t stop vaccinated people with capitalist disregard for others from spreading the disease.

Today we need people to spread the need for collective values and a communist world. It has been said that such people do not just happen, they are born in struggle. Now is the time to join Progressive Labor Party to develop the mental communist vaccine that can destroy the world’s greatest pandemic—capitalism.

★★★★★

Free Mohawk! Free them all with communist revolution!

The struggle continues to force the racist bosses to drop all charges against Black artist/organizer Jeremy “Mohawk” Johnson. Mohawk was attacked and arrested in August during an anti-kkkop protest in downtown Chicago with many others, and remains on house arrest connected to “aggravated assault.” Communists from Progressive Labor Party (PLP) have been active in trying to build this battle in the streets, courts, and our workplaces.

The fight to free Mohawk has expanded into a wider mass campaign to challenge capitalist state terror that faces antiracist fighters here in the city. A grassroots citywide defense committee has been created, and over 60 antiracists filed a lawsuit against the Chicago Police Department after being targeted and beaten by the bosses’ attack dogs (See CHALLENGE, 12/16).

So if you’re in the Chicago area on December 29th, come support the fight by joining the rally and picket in front of Leighton Courthouse on 26th Street and California Avenue at 9:30 am CST. The capitalist bosses fear nothing more than a multiracial united working-class armed with communist politics. Let’s keep up the fight to free Mohawk, and tear down this whole racist system!



Engel’s bicentennial

Workers made him a communist

Friedrich Engels, the comrade in arms of Karl Marx, was born on November 28, 1820, in Barmen, Germany. His father was a textile manufacturer, a reactionary and religious man. He forced young Engels into a commercial apprenticeship, first in his own company, then in another. Despite his reluctance, Engels mastered this profession.

In 1841-2, Engels did voluntary military service in Berlin where he could attend lectures at the university. There he made contact with liberal, anarchist and left-Hegelian circles, and studied military science. In 1842, he began work in his father’s cotton mill in Manchester, England. Engels would go after work into the working-class neighborhoods where he saw the misery of the proletariat. He got to know English labor leaders and married an Irish worker, Mary Burns.

Workers of Manchester made Engels a communist

Engels read everything that had been written about the situation of the English working class and carefully studied available official documents. Engels came to understand that it is their dire economic situation that drives workers to fight for their liberation. However, liberation from capitalism will only happen if the working class consciously sets it as its goal. At the age of 25, Engels published *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. As early as 1844, he had published *Outline of a Critique of Political Economy* in Franco-German Yearbooks where Marx also worked. Contact with Engels was undoubtedly a factor in Marx’s decision to study political economy, the science in which his works have produced a veritable revolution (Lenin).

In 1848, Marx and Engels published the world-

famous Manifesto of the Communist Party. In that year, as democratic revolutions broke out in Europe, both worked on the revolutionary newspaper, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. The Prussian state persecuted the paper and its editors, and expelled Marx from Germany.

In May 1849, Engels fought on the barricades in his homeland during an uprising. In June, he fought in another uprising. After Prussian troops crushed it, he fled to Switzerland. In 1850, Engels returned to Manchester, where he worked again in the Ermen & Engels spinning mill. Meanwhile he carried out revolutionary organizing, and supported Marx financially. Both men joined the International Workers Association, the First International, which helped workers’ parties, newspapers and organizations worldwide.

During this period Marx began systematic work on the materialist criticism of bourgeois political economy, culminating in the first volume of *Capital* in 1867. Could Marx have done this without the constant professional and scientific advice and material support from Engels? It is doubtful. After Marx’s death in 1883, Engels published two more volumes of *Capital* and was a leader of the international socialist and communist labor movement.

Engels fought for materialism

Marx and Engels rejected the preconceived idealist view that it is the development of the mind that explains the development of nature but that, on the contrary, the ideas of the mind must be derived from nature, from matter. ...Unlike Hegel and the other Hegelians, Marx and Engels were materialists. Regarding the world and humanity materialistically, they perceived that just as mate-

rial causes underlie all natural phenomena, so the development of human society is conditioned by the development of material forces, the productive forces (Lenin, *Frederick Engels* 1895).

Lenin fought for Engels’ elaboration of this revolutionary-materialistic point of view in his great philosophical work *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. While Marx at that time worked his way further into the depths of the critique of political economy, Engels ... dealt with general scientific problems and with diverse phenomena of the past and present in the spirit of the materialist conception of history and Marx’s economic theory in works such as *Anti-Dühring* (analyzing highly important problems in the domain of philosophy, natural science and the social sciences), *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, *The Peasant War in Germany*, and other works

There are many stories about the generous, humorous, witty host, who was a disinterested helper to countless comrades. Engels put all his strength and inheritance at the disposal of the working class. “The European proletariat may say that its science was created by two scholars and fighters whose relationship to each other surpasses the most moving stories of the ancients about human friendship. Engels always ... placed himself after Marx. ... His love for the living Marx and his reverence for the memory of the dead Marx were boundless (Lenin “Fredrick Engels”).☺

Engels has no grave. “In accordance with Engels’s instructions his body was cremated and his ashes scattered in the sea ...” (*T. Carver, The Life and Thought of Fredrich Engels*)

A glimpse of communist collectivity

Continued from page 8

eventually reversed. Land owners kept private plots for individual farming. These became important sources of private income.

Without class consciousness China's communes fail

China too was a "land of famine," with devastating natural disasters every few years,

compounded by feudal and capitalist governments who cared nothing for the workers' lives. In liberated areas and after the victory of the communist revolution (1949) the Chinese Communist Party instituted land reform, which created a small peasant economy without landlord exploitation. In the mid 1950s the Rural People's Commune movement began. Within a few years all agriculture had been collectivized into communes.

A class analysis is needed to understand the communes – why they succeeded, and why they were eventually abolished. Working class farmers were the backbone of the communes. Middle peasants – the petite bourgeoisie – those with some land, tools, animals, etc., were often ambivalent.

The basic political question was whether production and profit would win out over communist

politics. At the basic level the communes (collective farms) awarded work points and points for a peasant family's contribution of tools, animals, etc., to the collective. The goal was to move towards a more egalitarian system of production, one not based on profit. This was gradually rolled out in most communes, with the support of many peasants and, in the leadership, revolutionaries around Mao Zedong.

Reforms lead to party splits

While many party leaders claimed to view the communist movement as the best vehicle for liberating China from imperialist domination they saw the founding principle – "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" – as secondary, attainable only after a long historical period, if at all.

In 1958-61 there was a serious famine and reformist members (members who wanted to retain aspects of capitalism) in the Party leadership blamed the communes for not reserving enough of their production. The communes were accused of allowing over-consumption so that there was not enough food during the famine. Reformist members immediately pushed for dismantling the more egalitarian aspects of the communes and for material incentives based on production.

Poor peasants, plus the revolutionary forces

around Mao, were the key force supporting the more egalitarian policies in the communes. In the end, however, they were no match for those in the Party who wanted to abolish the communes and revoke the once won reforms.

A vision of communist collectivism

The communes provided not only food but education, health care, and infrastructure work. While they could certainly have done much better if they had had the support of the Party leadership on all levels, at their peak they provided schools for what workers' lives post revolution might look like.

As we continue to fight for communism, even during the darkest of nights, PLP remembers that it is only with worker-led, communist revolution that we will smash the chains of capitalism that are built to kill our class.

Sources: Zhun Xu, *From Commune to Capitalism. How China's Peasants Lost Collective Farming and Gained Urban Poverty* (2018); Grover Furr, *Blood Lies Chapters 2 & 3* (2014); PLP, "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution & the Reversal of Worker's Power in China." *PL Magazine* vol. 8 no. 3 Nov. 1971; Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After. A History of the People's Republic*. 3rd edition, 1999.



RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Afghanistan: How U.S. imperialist wars destroyed farmers

NYT, 12/9 — ...80-year-old Jamal Khan's...plot of land was the source of his family's livelihood — until the American forces arrived...Armored vehicles drove into fields of knee-high corn stalks, claimed about 30 acres that were owned by about as many families and quickly cordoned off the area with barbed wire. This was how Combat Outpost Honaker-Miracle, one of roughly 1,000 military installations the United States and its coalition partners would prop up across Afghanistan....

Mr. Khan is one of countless Afghans whose land has become a casualty of the U.S.-led war and the sprawling military structure born from it...The Americans have left...but Mr. Khan does not have his land back...Not only are Afghans deprived of justice under the American-backed government, but...the U.S. military presence has added to the injustice....Although the Afghan army now occupies his land, Mr. Khan is still required to pay tax on the plot...In Northern Balkh Province, the U.S.-led coalition forces built a base next to the provincial capital's airport. Amanullah Balkhi...says the installation occupies about 20 acres of his land....

"I have the deed, and...the courts have attested that this is my land," he said. But the Americans still have the land and they still deny me...[At] a base in Panjwai...about 10 years ago, dozens of coalition vehicles arrived at the small village....getting to work building a new base. They didn't carve a road...where we came and went — they carved a road for themselves through people's lands, people's gardens," said Fida Muhammad a tribal elder...

"It ruined the irrigation system too....The land dried," Mr. Muhammad said.... "Many families...went to the city for daily labor...." When a base was transferred to Afghan control....Afghan commanders...did not care about the local residents' grievances which they saw as an issue between the farmers and the Americans.

U.S.-British WWII bombings deliberately murdered civilians

NYT Book Review, 11/24—"War" by Margaret MacMillan — The United States and Britain...bombing of Germany and Japan in World War

II...deliberately aimed to terrorize civilian populations. In 1945, Americans flying over Tokyo dropped incendiary bombs, a weapon chosen deliberately because so many homes were built of wood; the raid killed as many as 100,000 civilians and left a million homeless....Maj/ Gen. Curtis LeMay...[said] the Japanese were "scorched and boiled and baked to death." MacMillan notes: "It was no oversight that mass bombings were not included in the Allied indictment of Nazi leaders at the Nuremburg trials."

Pandemic hit Latin, Black, Asian women the hardest

NYT, 11/13 — ...A gender gap in retirement security [combined with] women earn[ing] less than men and...[being] more likely to take time off from work to care for children...[means] interruptions diminish wage growth, retirement savings and Social Security benefits....Women...also outlive men [and]...face higher health care expenses in retirement.

...The pandemic recession is disproportionately damaging [to] women...experts call it a "shecession." Latina, Black and Asian American women have been hit the hardest....Many entered the pandemic earning less, [and] have experienced higher jobless rates....and many may never become fully employed again...Losses beyond the immediate salary...compound over time in...missed wage growth, retirement savings and Social Security benefits....

...Four times as many women as men dropped out of the labor force in September alone and barely half that number returned...Women earn 82 cents for every dollar earned by men...[and] 49 cents on the dollar in 2015 when measuring earnings of all workers....

The structural problems that women face...translate into problems maintaining their living standards in retirement and raise their risk of falling into poverty...A larger percentage of [women's]...retirement time is spent needing assistance with their daily living.

Slaveholder Chief InJustices of the Supreme Court

NYT (Book Review), 11/25 — [When] the enslaved Dred Scott brought his first lawsuit for free-

dom in Missouri, where he was held in bondage,...the Supreme Court hand[ed] down its notorious verdict in 1857. Black people, Chief Justice Roger Taney declared, "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

...In 1813, when the Supreme Court, under Chief Justice John Marshall...in an appeal brought by Mina Queen, an enslaved woman, it was handing a victory to the slaveholding class — of which Marshall was decidedly a member. Marshall personally held more than 150 people in bondage.

Structures of segregation embedded in daily lives

NYT, 12/1 — "CHANGE"...the letters mark...the St. Louis Hotel & Exchange, where...enslaved people...were once sold,...lingering traces that were hidden in plain sight... "Colored" entrances to movie theaters, or walls built inside restaurants to separate non-white customers....Photographs capture the Black institutions that arose in response to racial segregation...[and] depict the sites where Black people were attacked, killed or abducted....The Ghosts of Segregation. ...The small side window at Edd's Drive-In...was actually a segregated window used in the Jim Crow era to serve Black customers

The locked black double doors aside Seattle's Moore Theater...was once the "Colored" entrance used by non-white moviegoers to...the theater's second balcony...Slavery is often referred to as America's "original sin." Its demons still haunt in the dorm of segregated housing, education, health care [and] employment...The painted sign for Clark's Café in Huntington, Ore, which trumpeted "All White HELP," was destroyed....The Houston Negro Hospital School of Nursing has since been demolished...

These photographs are...more about the people who once populated them....[and are] a testament to the endurance of the racial inequalities...The deaths...of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, among many other Black Americans, prompted...one of the largest movements in U.S. history. And these pictures prove...the evidence of the structures of segregation — and the ideology of white supremacy — still...[are] embedded in...our day-to-day

SOVIET AND CHINESE COMMUNES

A GLIMPSE OF
COMMUNIST
COLLECTIVISM



USSR 1930s: youth work in collective farm.

Under capitalism profit comes before all and at the expense of workers’ lives. During a global pandemic that has left many workers unemployed and starving, the bosses and their mouth pieces are working overtime to hide their present day agricultural atrocities.

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) however, wants to remind workers that with communist revolution we will bring back the collectivization of agriculture - a practice that ensures sufficient production to feed the entire working class.

Proletariat over profits

“Collectivization, [was a] policy adopted by the Soviet government, pursued most intensively between 1929 and 1933, to transform traditional agriculture in the Soviet Union and to reduce the economic power of [land owners]...” (Britannica 12/20). Workers were asked to forgo individual property ownership and collectivize their farms.

With the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and China, agricultural collectivization meant ending massive famines that, over centuries, had killed millions of workers due to starvation.

Politics, not profit, were primary. The aim was to structure society, in this case the production of food,

a basic human need, in a way that benefited all members of the working class. Many farmers who considered themselves members of what Karl Marx called the petite bourgeoisie (small business owners) needed to be won to the idea of taking leadership from politically-conscious poor peasants and put the promotion of egalitarian communism first. Maximum production can only be attained when farm workers are inspired by a commitment to help each other.

Russian reforms end legacy of famines

Famine has struck Russia hundreds of times during the past millennium. 1917 saw a serious crop failure causing an urban famine in 1917-18. In

the 1920s the USSR had a series of famines: in 1920-1923 in the Volga and Ukraine, plus one in western Siberia in 1923; in the Volga and Ukraine again in 1924-25, and a serious although little-studied famine in Ukraine in 1928-1929. This history is essential in understanding the famine of 1932-1933 and the response of the Soviet government.

Soviet collectivization of agriculture was a reform — but a significant improvement, none-the-less, in the security and lives of the peasant population and therefore of the entire population. It was not undertaken to “tax” or “exploit” the peasants or to extract value from the countryside. On the contrary: during the decade 1929-1939 the Soviet government spent tens of billions of rubles on agriculture.

At the time, Joseph Stalin and the Bolsheviks viewed collectivization as the only way to swiftly modernize agriculture, to put an end to the wasteful and labor-consuming cultivation of individual land holdings.

As with many reform struggles, there was fight-back from land-owners who were blind to the failings of capitalism. Many peasants, however, actively supported collectivization. This number increased when local organizers were sharp enough to explain that smashing a profit system that benefited only the bosses was in all workers’ interest.

When another famine occurred there was no choice but to redistribute food and resources. Mark Tauger, an agricultural historian, writes:

This evidence shows, in particular, that collectivisation allowed the mobilisation and distribution of resources, like tractors, seed aid, and food relief, to enable farmers to produce a large harvest during a serious famine, which was unprecedented in Russian history and almost so in Soviet history... this research shows that collectivisation ... did in fact function as a means to modernise and aid Soviet agriculture.

Soviet collective farms remained until the end of the USSR in 1991. But like many reforms, they did not develop more egalitarian practices or an advance towards a classless society and were

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